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Fewer U.S. Officials May Classify Papers

KEY BISCAYNE, Fla., April 24 (UPI)—The White House announced today a sharp reduction in the number of government officials authorized to classify documents and keep them from public view.

The announcement came in an interim report from the interagency classification review committee, a group set up by President Nixon in the aftermath of the Pentagon Papers controversy.

The report said there had been a 63 per cent reduction—from 48,814 to 17,883—in persons authorized to classify materials as top secret, secret and confidential. It also said there had been a 71 per cent reduction in authorized classifiers or top secret, the most rigid of the three classifications.

These figures did not include the Central Intelligence Agency.

The report also said that 29 million pages of records from World War II had been declassified already and predicted that the job of going through 160 million pages of documents during this era would be completed by 1975.

Historians have been pressing for declassification of World War II documents for years, and Mr. Nixon two years ago ordered a speed-up in the process at the same time he established the review board.

The board was established in response to a public outcry at the time of the Pentagon Papers disclosures that government documents too often were made secret to avoid embarrassment and not for national security or other legitimate reasons.

As an example of the reductions, the report showed that the U.S. Information Agency, which formerly had 211 persons authorized to stamp documents top secret, now has none.

The White House also announced that Mr. Nixon was accepting with regret the resignation of John Eisenhower, son of the former President, as chairman of the committee.

As acting chairman, Mr. Nixon designated Dr. James B. Rhoads, the archivist of the United States. Eisenhower resigned his post, according to presidential spokesman Gerald L. Warren, because he had taken the job as deputy commander of the 79th Army Reserve Command in Colmar, Pa.